



MERTHYR TYDFIL'S *FAMILY FOCUSED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S* TRANSITION PLAN 2011 – 2014



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Welcome

We have made considerable progress since our first Children and Young People's Plan in 2008 with a strong Children and Young People's Partnership and shared commitment to work together on our agreed priorities.

Whilst we are proud of what we have achieved we are not complacent and we know that we have much more to do. We remain amongst the most deprived County Boroughs in the country, with all the impact that this has on the lives of our children and young people.

That is why we very much welcome the 2010 Child Poverty Strategy and are delighted to have been selected as one of Wales' first Families First Pioneer areas, as part of the Welsh Government's commitment to support families and tackle child poverty. This will build on our progress toward integrated family support services and our work to support the most vulnerable families in Merthyr Tydfil.

The development of this plan has followed the same robust process as our first plan, bringing together the views of children, young people and partners in order to identify local priorities.

Being selected as a 'pioneer' area has meant that, for this planning cycle, we have decided to focus on the next twelve months in terms of a Family Focused Children and Young People's Transition Plan. The rationale for this is that over the coming months there are developments, both national and local, that will impact and inform how we will aim to tackle child poverty. These include; Families First guidance, a joint needs assessment between Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Cwm Taf Local Health Board and the amalgamation and re-structure of delivery groups that focus on meeting local priorities including those detailed in this plan.

This transition plan will guide us through the coming year, allowing us to fully embrace the Families First model in our aim to tackle child poverty. This transition period will allow us time to set outcome measures, based not only on local priorities but on the Families First experience and the joint needs assessment soon to be completed.

We would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this plan. It is the daily commitment of agencies, professionals, volunteers and children and young people themselves, and their parents and carers, who make the difference. We hope this plan will support these efforts.

Signatories:



Giovanni Isingrini
Director of Community Services/
lead Director of Children and Young People



Councillor Richard Thomas
Children and Young People's Champion

Vision statement

Our shared vision for children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil, is to:

“Give our children and young people the best start in life in strong families, with the earliest and best support that we can offer, enabling all our children and young people to enjoy life and achieve their full potential”

This is fundamental if we are to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in our local authority area and raise aspirations for the next generation.

Merthyr Tydfil’s future, and that of our children and young people, depends on continued economic and social regeneration, creating a community where adults have the skills and the motivation to take up job opportunities and motivate their children to achieve. This is a particular challenge for us. The 2010 Child Poverty Strategy addresses the experience of communities such as ours where the legacy of our industrial history and our post-industrial experience is of a low adult skills base and, for many, low aspirations. This sits alongside high rates of limiting long-term illness and poor health. Every ward in Merthyr Tydfil is covered by the Communities First programme, giving some measure of the degree of challenges experienced by families and children in the County Borough.

Our commitment to eradicate child poverty and improve the life chances of our children and young people will seek to tackle these challenges. We believe that no family in Merthyr Tydfil should be disadvantaged by poverty and will endeavour to develop local partnership working that offers coherent support, tailored to individual circumstances.

Underpinning this plan is the partnership’s commitment to safeguard and protect our children and young people. We will work with the Local Children Safeguarding Board to ensure children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil are protected from harm, abuse and neglect and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. We will continue to do everything we can to protect them from maltreatment, prevent neglect and ensure children and young people have safe and effective care.

Chapter One

Introduction

In producing this plan we have confirmed our shared vision, principles and values, and our commitment to work together through the Partnership to deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people and their families. Although there has been considerable re-organisation and changes in key personnel involved in the partnership, we remain fully committed to this vision.

The Family Focused Children and Young People's Transition Plan will support the vision of the Community Strategy and the four themes. The links between the priorities of the Plan and the themes of the Community Strategy are shown in Appendix 1.

What does the Community Strategy say?

The Community Strategy for Merthyr Tydfil sets out a vision for the area which is;

“To strengthen our position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys, and be a place to be proud of where:

- People want to live, work and have a healthy fulfilled life
- People want to visit, enjoy and return
- People want to learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions

From a range of consultations within our communities we asked you to focus on four main themes to help provide a structure for the Community Plan.

The themes are;

- A Prosperous, Cultural and Diverse Merthyr Tydfil,
- A Healthy, Safe and Fair Society
- A Sustainable Living Environment
- Learning for Life

These themes are used to identify what we want to achieve to deliver the vision of the County Borough and to turn your aspirations into reality.

The Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board has responsibility to oversee development of the Community Strategy. The Local Service Board will ensure that the Community Plan is delivered through effective Partnerships and effective partnership working, and will provide regular progress reports.

The Local Service Board is committed to ensuring the Poverty Agenda is a priority for all. By ensuring the Child Poverty agenda remains the key priority, we will support the Welsh Government's core aim that “Children and Young People are not disadvantaged by poverty”

All of the priorities in this plan have an impact on tackling child poverty. On page 32 a matrix has been provided to show how each of our priorities meet the Welsh Government's seven core aims and the Child Poverty Broad Aims. Strategic and operational working plans will assist each priority having detailed actions on how we plan to meet each priority.

What we have achieved

We have made considerable progress over the last three years as a result of the Partnership's commitment to the 9 priorities agreed in 2008.

In particular,

- We have reduced absenteeism rates in our secondary schools from 10.4% in 2006/07 to 9.1% in 2009/10. Our education service was rated good by Estyn in 2010.
- We have developed a joint strategy for disabled children between health, social care and education, improved access to portage provision so that there are now no waiting lists and improved access for disabled children to play provision
- Our primary mental health service became core funded by Cwm Taf Local Health Board. We have continued to raise the awareness of emotional mental health and wellbeing across the Borough; and the Student Assistance Programme has been offered to all schools. We currently have over 130 professionals trained as facilitators and 90% of schools signed up to implement the training.
- We have brought together information about the most vulnerable families in the County Borough to improve the services we provide. Our family support panel and multi-agency referral group have worked effectively to bring coordinated family support to these families
- 100% of our schools have successfully engaged with the Healthy Schools Initiative. We have one of the first schools across Wales to achieve the National Quality Award
- We have completed our Play Strategy and implemented its highest priorities enabling 56 children and young people to access play provision, developed 6 inclusive holiday play schemes, supported 3 community groups to plan holiday play, coordinated 5 community play days and enabled an-inclusive after school physical play club for 32 children
- We continue to promote our work on participation. We are one of only 4 County Boroughs in Wales with a youth mayor and we were the first to establish a Junior Local Safeguarding Children Board. In addition we are proud of the fact that Young people sit on our Children & Young People's Partnership Board. We also ensure that the Youth Forum are fully engaged in the development and delivery our strategic priorities and that their voice is heard at each stage regarding future delivery and roll-out. For example, the young people helped develop the teenage pregnancy research work and worked on the Participation Kitemark Committee.

- We have worked with housing providers and the Third sector, pooling our resources to develop a 24hour supported housing project with 7 units. We have re-modelled floating support so that it is available when needed in evenings and weekends. We are also developing a medium intensity project with 4 units which will open next year

This is a brief overview of some of our achievements through partnership working. (Appendix 2 provides further details on achievement's made against specific priorities) We still have much to do to close the gap in life chances between Merthyr's children and young people, their families and the average for the rest of Wales. For this transition plan we reviewed these priorities, the Welsh Government's 2010 Child Poverty Strategy and our progress in achieving improved outcomes for children. Our County Borough Wide Youth Forum have been involved in this review and responded via a hard-hitting consultative response on the Child Poverty Strategy guidance.

Our existing priorities are highly relevant to the Child Poverty Strategy whilst also reflecting the greatest challenges we face in Merthyr Tydfil. We have therefore agreed that they should continue for the coming year, focusing on specific improvements we need to make and incorporating a renewed emphasis on combating the effects of child poverty.

How the Plan was developed

Merthyr Tydfil's Family Focused Children and Young People's Transition Plan covers the period 2011-2012. In producing this plan the Children and Young People's Partnership has reviewed the 9 strategic priorities in our first plan, and our progress against them.

Producing our first plan was a highly participative process drawing together the views of children and young people about issues which concerned them with the mapping of needs and services documented in the first plan.

For this plan the approach has been different. Each of the Partnership's implementation groups undertook a review of the progress made against the current priorities and the recommendation was to retain these existing priorities at this time. However, developments planned to take place over the next twelve months will have an effect on how we deliver our services under each priority. It was decided that at this stage of the planning process we are not in the position to outline in detail specific delivery model's/process. For this reason It was agreed that at this point a transition Plan would be more appropriate.

The draft Plan was taken to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and approval was given for the consultation process to begin. The consultation process lasted 12 weeks in accordance with the regulations. Draft copies of the Plan were sent to each of the authority's partners, as well as a copy being placed on the authority's website and the Merthyr Tydfil Facebook page. We also consulted other relevant fora such as those covering Employability/worklessness.

In addition two Children and Young People's consultation events were held, bringing together young people from across the County Borough to give their views on the priorities within the plan. Children and young people's representatives and their advocates were also involved in partnership meetings and in reviewing progress on the participation priority.

Once the consultation period ended, a task and finish group was formed in order to assess and decide what amendments were required. The Plan was then revised to incorporate these amendments.

The Views of Children and Young People

Children and young people continue to provide us with a wealth of information about their experience of family, school and community life in Merthyr Tydfil and also share their views about what they would like to see changed. Evidence of their views comes from our ongoing consultation work, in which the views of children and young people are continually being sought, through our County Borough Wide Youth Forum and Youth Cabinet, namely:

- the Looked After Children’s Forum;
- the Junior Local Safeguarding Board;
- the Environmental Working Group;
- the Participation Kitemark Committee;
- Training, Recruitment Group;
- Health Group
- Sport, Activity & Media Group;
- 4 Funky Dragon representatives – feeding into the National Participation agenda – covering, schools, statutory and voluntary sectors and inequalities; and
- a parallel Junior Youth Forum has been established to champion the views of the 11s and under;

Every school in the County Borough has a School Council. These are used actively to seek children and young people’s views. Furthermore, the Participation agenda continues to develop links with the Pupil Participation agenda in Education and our Youth Participation Apprentice Workers.

We continue to consult with children and young people. As part of the consultation process, young people from across the County Borough gave their views on the Plan and priorities which had been identified.

Below are some comments made by the children and young people who attended these consultation events. These comments have influenced the priorities set out in this plan.

What Children and Young People have told us...



Relationship to other Partnerships and Plans

The local implementation of the 2010 Child Poverty strategy cannot be met solely through the Children and Young People's Partnership and Plan. It requires other partnerships to lead on economic regeneration, adult learning, skills and qualifications and the health and well being of the adult community. Partnership working in Merthyr Tydfil is strong. There is close cooperation between the Local Authority, Local Health Board, Police, Third sector and other stakeholders.

The Local Service Board (LSB) is the overarching partnership, and drives forward the vision of the Community Plan. The LSB also has responsibility in ensuring that our vision is shared, and therefore has close relationships and overview not only with the Children and Young People's Partnership, but also with Merthyr Tydfil Health, Social Care and Well-being Plan and the Community Safety Plan.

The diagram below shows the relationship between the Family Focused Children and Young People's Transition Plan and the other statutory plans mentioned above.



A partnership review is being undertaken in Merthyr Tydfil with the aim to streamline partnership working. This will allow us to work more holistically across the partnerships by bringing together a partnership support team from Health Social Care & Wellbeing, Children & Young People and Community Safety and also by establishing a Partnership Board which will support the need to work together on key priorities. The streamlining of Partnerships will ensure a consistent approach to performance management. This will lead to clearly focused action plans with specific timescales and measurable outcomes.

The Communities First programme, which now covers every ward in the County Borough, will make a significant contribution to the Child Poverty strategy. The extent of Communities First coverage in Merthyr Tydfil means that the primary focus of our ambition is to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families, rather than to reduce inequalities between the better off and poorer communities within Merthyr Tydfil.

The Third Sector Manifesto is aligned with these partnerships and plans and will contribute to the delivery of change guided by the Compact and Partnership Working Code of Practice between the County Borough Council, the Health community and the Third Sector.

These plans cover our priority issues and ambitions for people and places in Merthyr Tydfil. Appendix 3 provides further details of the planning principles underpinning this work

The partnership will also seek opportunities for joint commissioning of services where appropriate. The establishment of Cwm Taf Local Health Board, covering Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf will provide new opportunities to jointly commission with the Local Health Board, Rhondda Cynon Taf and our wider partners for some services, particularly in specialist areas such as sexual health services. Aligning budgets around key priorities so that resources are released in line with our key priorities areas has proved effective over the last three years, with the new supported housing project developed through aligning resources from key agencies. Behaviour support services and the primary mental health service were mainstreamed following our priorities in our first plan and Cymorth was re-commissioned to directly support the plan priorities.

Child Poverty

We remain committed to doing all we can to eradicate child poverty and improving the life chances of our children and young people and their families. We believe that no family in Merthyr Tydfil should be disadvantaged by poverty and will endeavour to develop local partnership working that offers coherent support, tailored to individual, family and community circumstances.

The Child Poverty Strategy sets out the Welsh Government’s vision for tackling child poverty in Wales and improving outcomes for children and parents living in low income families. The Welsh Government has identified 3 strategic objectives for tackling child poverty, these are:-

- Reducing the number of families living in workless households
- Improving the skill levels of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment
- Reducing the inequalities in health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty.

These objectives are supported by 13 Broad Aims related to the eradication of child poverty in Wales, and are linked to the Welsh Government’s 7 core aims, as shown below.

Child Poverty Broad Aims	WAG’S Core Aims for Children and Young People
To support parenting of children.	To have a flying start in life
To reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children. To help young persons participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.	To have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities
To reduce inequalities in health between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the well-being of their children)	Enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse victimisation and exploitation

<p>To reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the well-being of their children).</p>	<p>Have access to pay, leisure, sporting and cultural activities</p>
<p>To help young persons participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.</p>	<p>Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised</p>
<p>To ensure that all children grow up in decent housing.</p> <p>To ensure that all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities.</p>	<p>Have a safe home and community which support physical and emotional wellbeing</p>
<p>To increase income for households including one or more children with a view to ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, there are no households in the relevant income group.</p> <p>Ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, children living in households in the relevant income group are not materially deprived.</p> <p>To promote and facilitate paid employment for parents of Children.</p> <p>To provide parents of children with the skills necessary for paid employment.</p> <p>To help young persons take advantage of opportunities for employment</p>	<p>Are not disadvantaged by Poverty</p>

These broad aims recognise that the causes and effects of child poverty are complex, multifaceted and cut across a number of areas.

Why is child poverty a local priority?

Merthyr Tydfil has one of the highest rates of deprivation in Wales. 35% of our population, (19,000 people), live in lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which are among the 10% most deprived in Wales. 36.8% of our children are in families dependent on out of work benefits. The combined effect of poor health, low skills and a high rate of worklessness means that many children in Merthyr Tydfil experience the effects of poverty every day.

Findings from a recent local Child Poverty workshop identified that a wide range of partner agencies agreed that alleviating the impact of poverty is a local priority and that no family in Merthyr Tydfil should be disadvantaged by poverty. This belief supports the Welsh Government's core aim that "children and young people are not disadvantaged by poverty"

Giving our children and young people the best start in life in strong families, with the earliest and best support that we can offer, is our focus. This is fundamental if we are to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in our local authority area, raise aspirations for the next generation and set a renewed direction.

Putting families first

Most children in Wales grow up within family settings and the home environment is fundamental to shaping children and young people's life chances. As a consequence, tackling inequalities and achieving better outcomes for children means supporting families.

Merthyr Tydfil along with Rhondda Cynon Taf and Blaenau Gwent form one of the Welsh Government's new Families First Pioneer areas. As a pioneer area our aim is to lead the way in improving the delivery of services to families across Wales, especially those living in poverty, as set out in the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy. It is a part of the Welsh Government's wider programme of reform targeted at families most in need within Wales, including the Integrated Family Support Team.

We have been tasked with ensuring that efficient and effective service models are in place to move families out of poverty in line with the three strategic objectives of the Child Poverty Strategy as set out on page 12.

This will require us to have local arrangements that:

- Focus our efforts on **early identification** and **prevention** to prevent problems from escalating for children, young people and families, reducing the need for intensive, higher cost interventions later on;
- Provide more **integrated services** that are accessible, equitable and effective;
- Ensure the most **efficient use of limited resources** and maximise opportunities for **integrated working** and **joint commissioning**; and

- Ensure our **workforce** is appropriately **skilled** to work together across institutional and professional boundaries, focused on the needs of children, young people and families.

A scoping exercise has been carried out to identify the current approaches to family support services and programmes operating across each of the Pioneer's local authorities. This work identified numerous examples of joint working, multi-agency service delivery and early intervention and preventative family-focused services. Part of our work will now involve ensuring that these services fulfill the above local arrangements.

Families do not come in neat packages, and they do not have identical needs. Accordingly, the variety of needs cannot always be met through one-size-fits-all solutions. Rather, children, young people and families often require a broad range of help and support of varying intensity, throughout life.

There is emerging consensus, and evidence from programmes like Flying Start, that the best way of supporting families, particularly those families in poverty, is through an integrated, whole family approach. The development of a whole family approach built around integrated services, providing holistic support to children, young people and families at every level of need is at the heart of Families First.

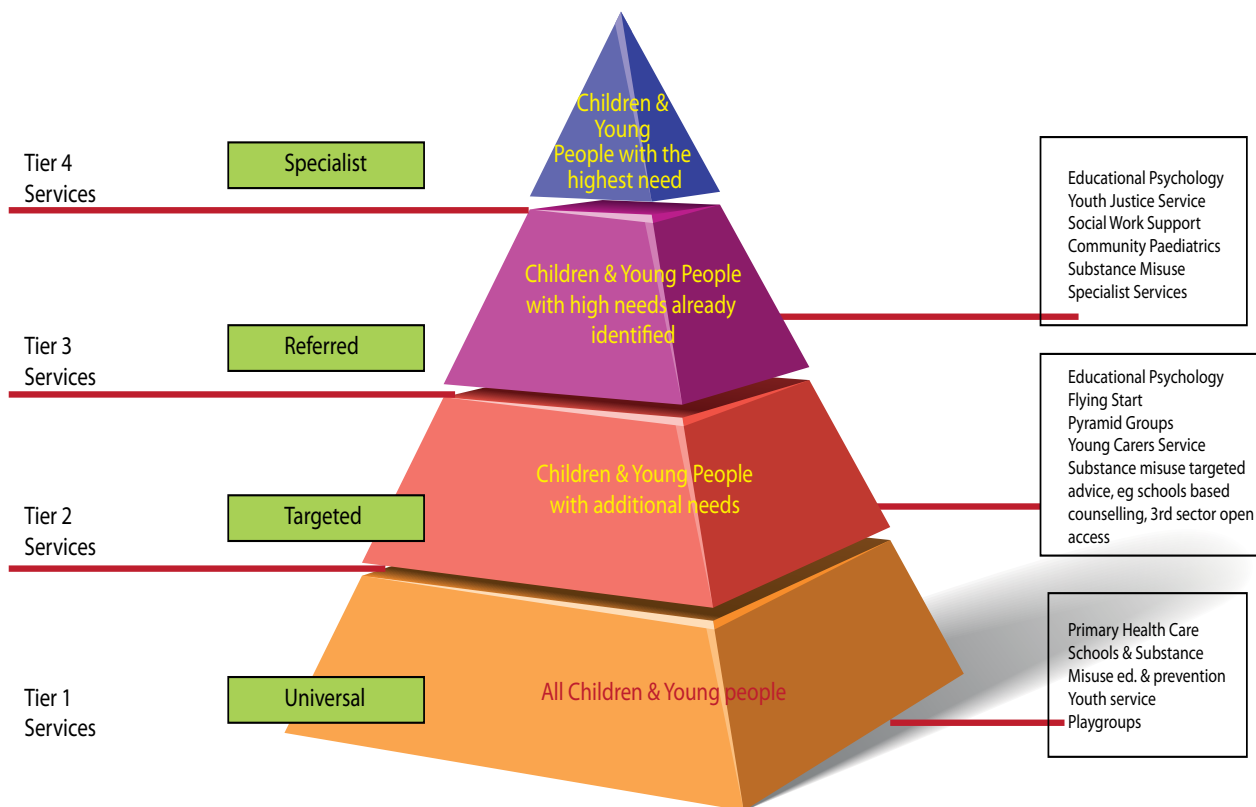
What approach will be taken to reduce the impact of child poverty and meet the priorities in this Plan.

Traditionally we have used the tiered model of service provision (Figure 1) for children and young people, relating services to different levels of need, to illustrate the range of support and the varied services that need to be in place to help children, young people and families. Viewed in this context Families First aims to achieve:

1. Improvements in the interface between services and tiers of need to ensure that services work better together and are seamless.
2. Stronger services at tiers 2 and 3 in order to reduce the number of families needing tier 4 services.

Many stakeholders though have commented that families rarely fit neatly within this tiered model.

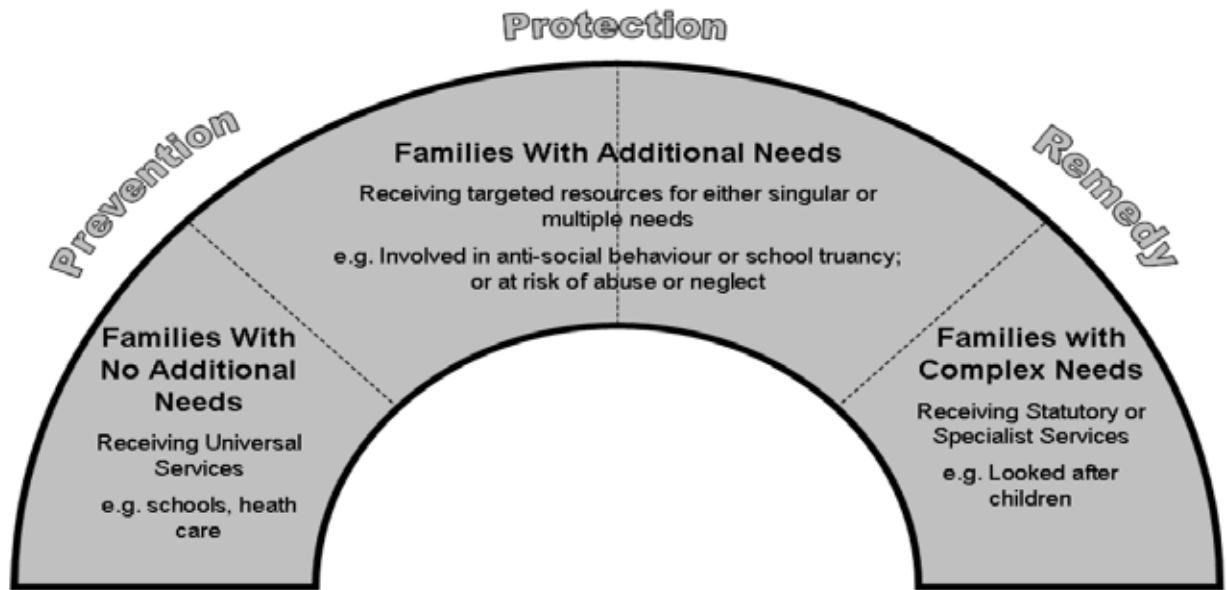
Figure 1: A tiered model of service provision for children and young people, relating services to different levels of need



An alternative approach, which better captures the aims of Families First, is to look at support for families across a spectrum of need, rather than by the nature of the service required. Families First provides an opportunity for local areas to consider whether or not support for families operates effectively across this spectrum and provides a continuum of support.

The Efficiency and Innovation Board's (EIB) New Models of Service Delivery Group recently published a report examining the diverse Team Around the Family approaches that currently operate in Wales and identified the need for a systemic approach to supporting families that encompassed prevention, protection and remediation (Figure 2).

Figure 2



- **Preventative** – takes account of wider family needs by addressing individual needs through a broad range of programmes/interventions that are typically universal (e.g. by promoting positive parenting or supporting family learning);
- **Protective** – detects and supports families which, without intervention, may reach crisis. Protection here is used in a general sense and should not be confused with, for example, ‘child protection’ as used in a social services or legal context. The approaches are aimed at early identification and action to support families well before they reach crisis point, and to stop problems escalating to that point. These typically involve looser, multi-agency approaches towards meeting identified needs (e.g. Team around the Family models);
- **Remedy** – supports families at or near crisis point through fully integrated support (e.g. Integrated Family Support Services, IFSS). The Families First programme aims to drive improvements to family support, its design and delivery, and in so doing, reduce the numbers of families developing more complex needs and thus requiring more intensive and costly interventions. Accordingly, the principal focus of Families First rests between preventative and protective approaches.).

Greater links with service delivery to complex families (e.g. IFSS) and community driven approaches (e.g. Communities First) will ensure a whole system approach at national, regional and local level to ensure effective working between all agencies and the community in working with disadvantaged children and families. They will link and promote access to services available more widely to disadvantaged families and communities.

Integration of delivery

In order to develop an integrated approach to family support in Wales which will improve both short and longer term outcomes for parents, children and young people living in poverty we think services need to be organised in such a way that the support provided is:

- **family-focused**, taking a whole family approach to improving outcomes;
- **bespoke**, tailoring help to individual family circumstances;
- **integrated**, with effective coordination of planning and service provision across organisations, ensuring that needs assessment and delivery are jointly managed and that there is a seamless progression for families between different interventions and programmes;
- **pro-active**, seeking early identification and appropriate intervention for families;
- **intensive**, with a vigorous approach and relentless focus, adapting to families' changing circumstances; and
- **local**, identifying the needs of local communities and developing appropriate service delivery to fit those needs.

We will complete current work to agree an information sharing protocol covering all agencies, including the Third sector, to ensure there are no barriers to sharing information either for general planning purposes or for planning support to individual children and their families.

The development of new models of service delivery through Families First is being supported by a new Families First fund, which will become operational from April 2012 to support the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy. The Families First Fund replaces Cymorth and will operate on a different basis, taking account of the lessons from Cymorth. The evaluation of Cymorth showed that previous projects were relatively small scale and distributed over a wide age range and variety of themes, consequently the contribution of Cymorth to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Wales as a whole was difficult to measure. Moreover, the grant did not leverage funding from mainstream providers which would have helped embed successful Cymorth-funded practices. The re-design of Cymorth and the support the new fund will provide for Families First is crucial to our ambitions for addressing child poverty.

We also believe that child poverty cannot be effectively addressed without investing in children's and young people's participation. The participation of children and young people is an essential part of the solution and we seek the involvement of children and young people throughout our planning cycle and in service delivery.

Evaluation

The overall purpose of this plan is to make a positive difference to the lives of children, young people and their families in Merthyr Tydfil. We can only quantify this impact by identifying a set of relevant outcome measures which relate to each priority and measuring the change in these data sets.

As this is a transition plan, although we will evaluate against specific outcome measures, these measures will be based on themes from our priority area's rather than specific outcomes. The reason for this is due to the nature of this plan; we are not able to develop specific outcome measures, as these have not yet been developed. These outcomes will be finalised during the lifetime of this plan, having received the information from our joint needs assessment and Families First Guidance.

Completing a joint needs assessment with Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Cwm Taf Local Health Board will form the basis of our evaluation, informing us of our local needs and priorities in the context of the Child Poverty Agenda. Once this exercise has been completed we will focus on developing outcomes and action plans to achieve them.

Approach

For this Transition plan we will focus on a formative evaluation approach, examining delivery, quality of implementation, organisational context and structures and procedures. Through this approach we seek to improve and strengthen the plan and the priorities within. This will also ensure that our vision is clear. Formative evaluation will allow us to pay special attention to the delivery and intervention of the plan, which is fundamental in ensuring that future planning is effective.

On-going evaluation

Currently we have Delivery Plans that assist each priority. These Delivery Plans have a number of set outcome measures for each specific priority and are monitored and updated by members of the delivery group, who support the plan. During this transition year, delivery groups will need to continue to meet and review progress, however their focus over this next year will be to ensure that their Delivery Plans are updated, family focused and that their actions look to tackle Child Poverty.

This process has already begun. As part of the Partnership review, these delivery groups are being re-evaluated and as a result, as we move forward, the new arrangements will ensure a more effective and efficient allocation of time, resource and output. This will include cross border mergers where necessary in order to ensure better outcomes and or best value.

Chapter Two

This chapter provides an overview of our priorities. It also shows how our priorities support the Welsh Governments seven Core Aims for children and young people and the Child Poverty Broad Aims.

These priorities have in common the need for multi agency involvement to deliver them, and are accompanied by commitment to improving all levels of multi-agency working.

Across all of these key priorities the underpinning focus will be to improve the life chances of children and young people through alleviating the impact of poverty and disadvantage.

Our Priorities are to improve:

1. attainment and life skills;
2. the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents;
3. emotional and mental health of children and young people;
4. safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people;
5. health and well being of all children and young people, particularly the sexual health of young people;
6. children and young people's enjoyment, learning and social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity;
7. children's, young people's and their parents' and carers' involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them- "having a voice having a choice"; and
8. homeless young people's access to housing and support;

Priority 1

Improving attainment and life skills

We want to improve the life chances of all our children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil by making learning available in all its various phases, thus increasing their potential to avoid poverty through gainful employment. The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- more children reaching their development milestone, whatever their age, attending school regularly, enjoying the experience of learning and achieving their expected level;
- more children reaching adulthood with skills and qualifications to equip them for work and adult life
- more children and young people engaging in informal learning activities outside the school environment

Why is this a local priority?

- improving educational attainment/achievement is a clear priority.
- basic skills
- pupil attendances at schools need to improve, particularly in Key Stage 1 and 2.
- evidence shows low attainment at baseline entry into school.
- there is a need to further reduce the number of young people not in education or training (NEET).
- high percentage of little or no life skills, disadvantaged from early years.
- high percentage of children and young people on the child protection register.
- high percentage of children and young people in the 'looked after' system.
- high proportion of children in the Youth Justice statutory and prevention service in alternative education settings, receiving less than 25 hrs per week in Education, training or employment (ETE)

Priority 2

Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents

Our focus for this priority outcome is children and young people with substantial and permanent physical or mental disabilities. As part of the first Children and Young People's Plan we have achieved multi-agency identification of children and young people in this group, analysed their needs and developed a commissioning strategy to meet those needs. Our focus for this second plan will be to work together using our commissioning strategy to deliver improved outcomes for these children and young people who have the most complex needs.

Why is this a local priority?

As part of the implementation of the first Children and Young People's Plan the Children and Young People's Partnership established a dedicated multi-agency planning group, the CYPP Children with Disabilities Group.

The group were asked to develop a proposal that would enable the CYPP to:

- Reach agreement about which and how many children are in the group being planned for;
- Consult parents and children about their needs;
- Consult voluntary organisations to inform the planning process
- Reach agreement about the broad area of service that different groups of children need;
- Identify a planner to assess the current gaps and waiting lists;
- Create a shared disabled children's register

Priority 3

Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people

We want to improve the mental health of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil, developing services which build emotional resilience, and ensuring support is available to all children and young people when they need it. We will also focus on the needs of young people who display significant emotional or behavioural distress, but who do not have a diagnosed mental disorder. Early intervention to support this priority means that, we will focus on supporting parenting and improving the attachment of very young children to their parents or care givers, especially those at Tier 2 and above.

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Improving and maintaining the emotional and mental health of children and young people. We want to lay the foundations for good mental health for children and young people by supporting parenting and ensuring that very young children are securely attached to a caring parent or caregiver.
- Improving emotional and mental health of young people. We want to improve the mental and emotional health of all young people in Merthyr Tydfil especially those with the greatest needs.
- Ensure that those children/young people who are exhibiting emotional and mental health difficulties have access to a service within a timeframe needed by the individual.

Why is this a local priority?

As part of the implementation of the first Merthyr Tydfil Children and Young People's Plan, a mapping exercise was completed to identify the three hundred most vulnerable families living in the borough. A common theme highlighted by this exercise was that a high percentage of the families identified were recognised as having poor emotional mental health and well being. Good emotional health underpins achievement and well being in both childhood and adulthood. In order to improve the emotional mental health of all young people we will look at developing/maintaining services that focus on building resilience and developing the social and emotional skills of young people so that they are better equipped to deal with and manage problems/issues that may affect their emotional well being.

This priority is coterminous with the Health, Social care and Well being strategy and their commitment to promoting emotional and mental well-being.

Priority 4

Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people

We want Merthyr Tydfil to be a safe community for all children but especially those most in need of safety and protection.

We want improved outcomes in safety, health, development and attainment for the most vulnerable children and we want those families to be able to support themselves with less agency involvement.

Why is this a local priority?

As part of the implementation of the first Children and Young People's Plan the Children and Young People's Partnership established a dedicated multi-agency planning group, the Vulnerable Families Sub group. Merthyr Tydfil has taken an innovative approach to service design and delivery for families with high levels of need and will deliver its family support services to the most vulnerable families which prevent escalation red. Those families will be identified using a bespoke tool kit based on the 'think' family indicators.

Merthyr Tydfil has also been selected as a pioneer area by the Welsh Government in relation to the delivery of its Families First Initiative and we will work in partnership with Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's in order to develop an integrated approach to family support in Wales which will improve both short and longer term outcomes for parents, children and young people living in poverty.

Priority 5

Improving the health and well being of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil is a key priority; however priority five will focus on the sexual health and well being of young people.

We want to improve the sexual health and well being of all our children and young people. To do this we need to focus on

- reducing conception rates in young people,
- reducing rates of sexually transmitted infections in young people
- improving our services to pregnant teenagers and young parents
- quantifying the link between alcohol/substance misuse and young people's sexual behavior and health

Why is this a local priority?

There were 85 conceptions to girls aged 15-17yrs in Merthyr Tydfil in 2008. This is a rate of 73.5 per 1,000 girls, 1 in every 14, the highest in England and Wales. 52 of these conceptions led to a live birth, 33 were terminated. Between 2006 and 2008, there were 235 conceptions in this age group, with 157 births and 78 terminations.

Rates of sexually transmitted infections are increasing in young people.

The impact that teenage pregnancy has on the lives of young people and the babies that result, is well researched and documented. The parents from poorer backgrounds and those disengaged from education are over represented. They are more likely to remain or become disengaged from their education, have a low income throughout their working life and live in poverty compared to their peers.

Babies born to teenage mothers are more likely to need intensive paediatric care, suffer from disease, disability and poor health throughout their lives. They are also more likely to become teenage parents themselves.

Despite the combined efforts of agencies in the first Children and Young People's Plan , including the provision of Personal Social Education in our schools, free contraception and sexual health information and advice across a number of settings, data suggests that rates of risky sexual behaviour are remaining constant or increasing. We do not know if this is a result of poor, or age-inappropriate information, changes in trends of sexual activity, or because young people are making deliberate lifestyle choices about their futures.

What we do know is that alcohol and substance misuse among our young people impacts on their sexual health and behavior. It lowers inhibitions and reduces contraception use, which leads to increased rate of sexual transmitted infections, poor self esteem and in some instance, unwanted or unplanned pregnancies. This is a County Borough wide issue, influencing more than just the sexual health of young people, and is reflected in the priorities of our other statutory plans.

Priority 6

Improve children and young people's enjoyment, learning, social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity.

Our focus is to continue to implement the highest priorities within our Play Strategy and meet new requirements highlighted by the Welsh Government. This priority is for all children and young people.

The outcome we want to achieve are:

- That all our children enjoy play, acquire social and intellectual skills, improve their emotional well-being, and develop their physical activity through self-directed play

Why is this a local priority?

Children learn through self-directed play how to mix with their peers, improve their motor skills, their fitness and general health. Self directed play contributes to children achieving many positive outcomes.

This is also a priority due to ever growing adult concerns for the safety of children e.g. road safety, fear of bullying, fear of strangers and the loss of safe open space over the years, as these have meant that opportunities for play have become constrained.

Despite the achievement of our highest priorities there are still key issues to tackle, these include;

- Reducing the waiting list for disabled play
- Some community play has failed due to lack of funding
- Action is needed on new government priorities with access to safe places to play.
- Gaps within geographical area's where there is little or no play provision
- Gaps within age groups; 7-12 year olds have little play provision available to them, and
- There is no registered open access play provision for under 8's.

A multi-agency group, supported by the Merthyr County Borough Council and the Tri-Counties Play Forum, is developing a multi agency play strategy to set out a programme to improve access to play for children across the County Borough.

Priority 7

Increasing children's, young people's and their parents' and carers' involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them - "having a voice having a choice"

The focus of this priority, in the light of the latest Welsh Government guidance on participation under the Children and Families Measure (section 12/sub-section 1) is that we will work to have our Participation Strategy, Promise and Toolkit adopted and implemented systematically in every agency delivering services to children and young people, encompassing 'Learner Voice' in Merthyr Tydfil and building on existing good practice. This priority is for all children and young people.

Why is this a local priority?

Children have a legal right to be consulted about decisions which affect them. In Merthyr Tydfil we are committed to the principle of empowerment of Children, young people and their parents in how we deliver all our children's services. This supports the UN declaration on the rights of the child. There is evidence that services in which children, young people and their families are fully involved will be better designed and more effective in meeting the needs identified.

Empowering children and young people to participate fully in decision making and all aspects of community life also helps develop skills, increases confidence and aspirations and assists young people to achieve at a higher level in adult life, and helps them become aware of their role as local and global citizens. We have some excellent examples of participation in both the Third Sector and statutory sectors in Merthyr Tydfil but we now want to ensure that participation and the Participation Strategy is systematically embedded in every organisation and service supporting young people.

Priority 8

Improving homeless young people's access to housing and support and improving our ability to identify those at risk of becoming homeless and preventing them from becoming homeless

We want to reduce homelessness amongst young people and ensure that young people who become homeless, or are not in appropriate accommodation, are supported to secure and retain safe accommodation

Why is this a local priority?

As part of the implementation of the first Children and Young People's Plan the Children and Young People's Partnership established a dedicated multi-agency planning group, the Children and Young People's Partnership Young People's Accommodation Sub group. The group was asked to develop a proposal that would address the housing needs of our most vulnerable young people and enable them to sustain successful tenancies in the future.

The group includes representatives from the Care Leavers Forum, the Homelessness Forum, The Youth Offending Team, Barnardos, Llamau, MTCBC Housing, Social Services and Social Regeneration and Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association. More recently, additional registered social landlords have become members including Wales and West Housing Association and Merthyr Valleys Homes.

As part of the planning process, the group undertook a needs assessment which identified a number of issues, including;

- the absence of direct access accommodation for 16-17 year olds. There is no high intensity support available for our young people.
- that 100, 16 to 17-year-old single persons and 294 single 18 to 24- year-olds presented as homeless during the previous 3 year period.

In addition, the group examined the existing services available to young people. They concluded that gaps in services available to young people were;

- support to reduce numbers registering as homeless by offering family interventions;
- crisis or high intensity support provided for young people leaving care; and
- the availability within the Third sector of low intensity floating support to young people, provided 9am until 5pm weekdays.

It was noted that the floating support services that are currently available are oversubscribed by 150% and had a poor success rate of young people maintaining tenancies.

Finding accommodation for homeless young people and care leavers is complex because of;

- The diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers.
- The capacity to offer a degree of choice of accommodation existing and planned provision of safe, affordable accommodation.
- The need for contingency arrangements.

Workforce Planning and Development

We have developed a Workforce Development Plan reflecting our partnership priorities. We now seek to deliver our strategy.

The overall aim of the Children and Young People's Workforce Development Plan in Merthyr Tydfil will be to :

- improve outcomes for all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil by supporting the implementation of the priorities of the CYPP Plan
- safeguard and promote their welfare
- identify new ways of integrated working across boundaries and multi-agency partnerships to focus resources (financial, human, physical)
- build on and extend existing services and further enhance and exploit partnership working
- ensure quality through capacity building to develop a skilled, competent and qualified children's workforce in Merthyr Tydfil.

Why is this a local priority?

The rationale for a Workforce Development Plan is based on the Welsh Government Guidance 'Shared Planning for Better Outcomes' which sets out how workforce issues will be addressed in Local Children and Young People's Plans and which recommends the development of local workforce planning and development strategies as an integral part of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

The Guidance states that the workforce section of the plan should concentrate on a small number of priorities determined by scrutinising the workforce issues under each Core Aim. Partnerships also need to consider the following more strategic issues:

- a. How will Partners take account of the labour market implications of designing and delivering or commissioning services for children and young people;
- b. How to improve the mix of skills within services, building on and incorporating the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge, to better meet the needs of children and young people;
- c. Recruitment, career development, developing HR capacity, implementing the Common Assessment Framework, improved information sharing, and other approaches to multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working, continuous development to embed good practice and developing leadership capacity and training opportunities to meet needs identified by the Children and Young Peoples Partnership.

It is envisaged that by collaborating with the Regional Social Care Partnership we will build on the progress that has already been made in these areas across the South East Wales Region and adopt some of the approaches that have already been successfully established. The role of the Workforce Development Sub-group will be paramount in establishing this partnership and identifying collaborative ways

of working to address workforce issues and consulting with the Children and Young People's partners to determine the best approach/solutions for the CYP workforce issues in the borough.

In time, we will need to provide an overview of the local workforce by type, number and setting, and indicate areas of difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, self employed carers and volunteers. This will be accompanied by analysis of the reasons, such as general skills shortages or local pay and conditions, together with action to be taken to address areas of concern. Again, we hope to approach this by replicating the approach taken by the Regional Social care Partnership.

The Workforce Development Plan is intended to have synergy with, rather than replace, workforce strategies in a wide range of partner organisations. It focuses particularly on actions to deliver the key priorities of the Family Focused Children and Young People's Transition Plan that will best be achieved in partnership rather than by means of a prescriptive, one fit all approach. It will be the responsibility of the Workforce Development Sub-group to use this document to provide clarity and guidance to the wider Partnership as to how workforce issues are to be addressed.

Our Workforce Development Plan will be launched in consultation and communication with relevant stakeholders and partners and a communications strategy will be developed to support this.

Several of these priorities will support more than one of the Welsh Government seven Core Aims for children and the 13 Child Poverty Broad Aims, as shown in table 1.

Table 1

7 Core Aims for Children and Young People	13 Child Poverty Broad Aims	Our priorities							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
To have a flying start in life	<p>To support parenting of children.</p> <p>To reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children</p> <p>To reduce inequalities in health between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the wellbeing of their children)</p> <p>To reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the wellbeing of their children)</p>								
To have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities	<p>To reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children</p> <p>To help young persons participate effectively in education and training</p>								

Enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse victimization and exploitation	To reduce inequalities in health between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the wellbeing of their children)								
Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities	To reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the wellbeing of their children)								
Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised	To help young persons participating effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.								
Have a safe home and community which support physical and emotional wellbeing	To ensure that all children grow up in decent housing To ensure that all children grow in safe and cohesive communities								

<p>Are not disadvantaged by poverty</p>	<p>To increase income for households including one or more children with a view to ensuring that, so far as a reasonably practicable, there are no households in the relevant income group.</p> <p>Ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, children living in households in the relevant income group are not materially deprived.</p> <p>To promote and facilitate paid employment for parents of Children.</p> <p>To provide parents of children with the skills necessary for paid employment.</p> <p>To help young persons take advantage of opportunities for employment</p>	
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Next steps

This transition plan will guide us through the changes we need to make in this forthcoming year, in order to meet our vision. The change of approach from the Team around the Child to the Team around the Family will be the basis of this change and will inform our future developments.

This year we will be looking at planning and developing systems and delivery groups to drive forward our vision. This will involve a review of our current systems and the delivery groups that will be required. This review will ensure we are working to achieve our priorities through the Families First approach.

We have commissioned a joint needs assessment with Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Cwm Taf Local Health Board and this will also form part of this review. The outcome of this assessment will inform the delivery groups. This will enable them to produce delivery plans that have measurable outcomes that reflect local needs and form part of the wider agenda for tackling child poverty.

Conclusion

By April 2012 we will have produced a plan with priorities that have measurable outcomes and reflect our commitment to tackling child poverty through the Families First approach.

These priorities will be supported by delivery groups that will have been developed over the coming months based on the outcomes of the joint needs assessment as well as the review and evaluation of the current delivery groups.

Appendix 1

Links to Merthyr Tydfil Community Plan

Community Plan		CYPP Plan
Theme	Sub Theme	
A Prosperous, Cultural Diverse Merthyr Tydfil	More Jobs	Priority 1 – Improving Attainment and Skills
	Strong and Sustainable Economy	Priority 1 – Improving Attainment and Skills
	Regenerated Communities	<p>Priority 1 – Improving Attainment and Skills.</p> <p>Priority 2 – Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents.</p> <p>Priority 3 – Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 4 – Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 5 – Improving the health and well being of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil is a key priority; however priority five will focus on the sexual health and well being of young people.</p>
	Arts, Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language	
	Recreation and Sport	Priority 6 – Improve children and young people’s enjoyment, learning and social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity.

<p>A Healthy, Safe and Fair Society</p>	<p>A Healthy Merthyr Tydfil</p>	<p>Priority 3 – Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 5 – Improving the health and well being of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil is a key priority; however priority five will focus on the sexual health and well being of young people.</p> <p>Priority 6 – Improve children and young people’s enjoyment, learning and social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity.</p> <p>Priority 7 – Increasing children’s, young people’s and their parents’ and carers’ involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them- “having a voice having a choice”.</p>
	<p>A Safe and Secure Merthyr Tydfil</p>	<p>Priority 4 – Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 8 – Improving homeless young people’s access to housing and support and improving our ability to identify those at risk of becoming homeless and preventing them from becoming homeless.</p>
<p>A Healthy, Safe and Fair Society (cont’d)</p>	<p>A Fair and Inclusive Merthyr Tydfil</p>	<p>Priority 2 – Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents.</p> <p>Priority 4 – Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 7 – Increasing children’s, young people’s and their parents’ and carers’ involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them- “having a voice having a choice”.</p> <p>Priority 8 – Improving homeless young people’s access to housing and support and improving our ability to identify those at risk of becoming homeless and preventing them from becoming homeless.</p>

	<p>Better access to quality services.</p> <p>Better access to quality facilities.</p>	<p>Priority 4 – Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 7 – Increasing children’s, young people’s and their parents’ and carers’ involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them- “having a voice having a choice”.</p>
A Sustainable Living Environment	Energy Efficient, Low Carbon and Low Waste Society.	
	High Quality Homes and Buildings.	
	Natural and Historic Environment.	
	A Sustainable Transport Infrastructure with a wider choice of travel options.	
	Efficient, effective and sustainable public services that support and enable its citizens.	Priority 7 – Increasing children, young people and their parents’ and carers’ involvement in the services which are designed for them - “having a voice having a choice”.

Learning for Life	Access and Engagement	<p>Priority 1 – Improving Attainment and Skills</p> <p>Priority 2 – Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents.</p> <p>Priority 3 – Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 4 – Improving safety and well being for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>Priority 5 – Improving the health and well being of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil is a key priority; however priority five will focus on the sexual health and well being of young people.</p>
	Success and Achievement	Priority 1 – Improving Attainment and Skills

Appendix 2

Progress and achievements during our first Children and Young people's Plan (CYP Plan)

This report highlights a sample of achievements made against specific priorities during our first CYP Plan

Priority 1

Improving attainment, qualifications and life skills.

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

- A free Flying Start pre-school childcare place available for every eligible 2-3 year old.
- A side by side Assisted Places scheme available to increase access to pre-school provision for children with an identified developmental delay.
- Improved access to pre-school provision for children with disabilities.
- Merthyr Tydfil Early Years and Childcare Quality Assurance Kitemark developed.
- Foundation phase implemented across all schools up to and including Year one (September 2010).
- Increased focus on pupil attendance in primary schools.
- Improved attendances at schools, especially at secondary and special schools.
- Development of the local curriculum at post 16.
- Increased achievement in informal learning settings within the youth service
- Declining exclusion rates.
- Improved support for all young people with enhanced provision through targeted learning coach support, personal support and information advice and guidance services.
- Reduction of first time entrants into the youth justice system.
- Increased access to participation in decision making for young people, including the roll-out of participation apprentices.
- Reduction of young people not in education, employment or training.
- The launch of the Vulnerable Families Strategy.
- Development of a Literacy Plan for the LA and also individual school Literacy Plans that link into the LA priorities.
- No schools, in any Estyn category, requiring additional support.
- Improved condition in school buildings. Three new primary school and four major school extensions constructed, while one school relocated into remodelled school.
- Completed a number of school reorganisation proposals including the consultation on sixth form closures to deliver the Merthyr Learning Quarter (MLQ).
- Family Support Service has identified "Child development and Education" as one of its outcomes for families who engage with the service. Families are receiving support to: access pre school settings, increase attendance at school, reducing barriers for engaging in school and accessing health provision where required.
- Big Lottery Funded – Home School Links programme (4 to 11 years) assisting parents to work with schools where school attendance is low, increasing the child's school attendance rates.

Priority 2

Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

The development of our Children with Disabilities Commissioning Strategy, which has provided us with the foundation for improved services for disabled children.

It covers the years 2010-2020 and tells disabled children and young people, and their families and local partner agencies how the identified needs of disabled children and young people and their parents could be met within available resources provided by health, the local authority and the Third Sector across the next 3, 5 and 10 years.

- We have agreed an action plan which will begin to implement the Children with Disabilities Strategy.
- We have consulted with parents and children about their needs.
- We have reached agreement about the area of service that groups of children need.
- We have assessed current gaps in services.
- We have identified the children with the most complex needs.
- We have developed an Inclusion Toolkit to encourage play settings to be more inclusive.

Priority 3

Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

- Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) pilot was rolled out in the Pen-y-Dre Cluster and a conference held in the Autumn Term 2010 to share good practice and celebrate success.
- Over 130 professionals have received Student Assistance Programme training.
- The creation of specialist posts to coordinate services/delivery that support emotional well being. These posts include; Attendance and Behaviour Co-ordinator, Substance Misuse Action Team Co-ordinator, and Emotional Well-being Co-ordinator.

For the younger children, the Vulnerable Families Sub Group of the CYPP has overseen the following developments, within the Family Support Service, which impact on Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People:

- Flying Start programme – Transition workers have been appointed in order to engage with parents who are not taking up their flying start entitlements. They are promoting flying start childcare and ensuring attendance for children aged 2 years. Where identified they are able to provide additional support to families who require further services. Intensive Health Visiting within Flying Start areas

is also providing an increase in Health input to families and children who are receiving a Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS) assessment at 2 and 3 years of age. This is helping to identify any developmental issues prior to school age.

- The Home School Links project employs a Parent Support worker to link parents of children (aged 4 – 11 years) who are experiencing difficulties in school with the school support services. Both one to one and group support is provided to assist parents with improving their child's school life and subsequently school attendance.
- A Strengthening Families Programme is coordinated by a Parent support worker who delivers the programme to parents and their children aged 10 to 14 years of age. The programme aims to increase family resilience in order to decrease the likelihood of children abusing substances.
- Vulnerable Families – The Family Support Service has identified Health and Wellbeing as one of its outcomes for families. A tool kit has been designed which draws on the Think Family indicators. The service is available to our most vulnerable families in Merthyr Tydfil with children aged 0 to 18 years of age.
- Promotion and implementation of the key worker role in all Early Years and Childcare settings.

Priority 4

Improving safety and wellbeing for the most vulnerable children and young people

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

- Vulnerable families Steering Group established.
- Vulnerable family mapping exercise completed and a report relating to vulnerable family on needs mapping completed.
- Vulnerable family outcome measurement Tool has been developed and integrated into shared referral form; this will enable us to measure the impact that our services have on vulnerable families.
- Vulnerable families have been identified and referred to the family support service.
- 211 vulnerable families have received family support under this priority and all have had a coordinated service.
- The Multi Agency Referral Group and Family Support panels are operating to plan bespoke services for vulnerable families.
- Integration exercise has commenced to identify lead personnel within services to champion Vulnerable Families.
- A single Family Support Service assessment and referral process has been implemented.
- Home School Links initiative providing family support to parents of children aged 4-11 implemented.
- Flying Start initiative implemented providing Family support and health visiting services to parents of pre school children.
- Access to a Family Information Service to increase knowledge and awareness of services that are available to families

Priority 5

Improving the health and well being of all children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil, particularly focusing on the sexual health of young people.

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

- Multi-disciplinary training to launch the SENSE DVD programme.
- Improved engagement and support for local LGBT groups.
- Provision of sexual health outreach work, providing group education and awareness training on all aspects of sexual health to young people in formal and non-formal settings, and one-to-one services for those with specific needs.
- Provision of sexual exploitation awareness training to staff working with young people across Merthyr Tydfil.
- Provision of training opportunities for parents and teenage children to encourage parents to provide positive sex and relationship education in the home.
- Condom Card scheme expanded to include outlets in every Ward in the local authority.
- Development of research to look at the impact of teenage conceptions on young people in Merthyr Tydfil.
- A reduction of 18% in teenage conception rates for the most recently realised reporting year (2009).

Priority 6

Improve children and young people's enjoyment, learning, social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play and recreational activity

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

More children have accessed safe open access play opportunities as a direct result of the first Children and Young People's Plan; in particular more disabled children have been supported to access mainstream play provision.

We have completed our Play Strategy and implemented the highest priorities in the plan as follows;

- Play Audit of provision in the County Borough to map quantity and type of provision available for children and young people between 7 and 14 years in order to identify priorities for development.
- 56 disabled children and young people supported in accessing mainstream play provision.
- 6 inclusive holiday play schemes developed and 3 groups supported in providing holiday play.
- Development of new basic play work training for volunteers and community groups piloted with 40 individuals.
- Disability Inclusive play toolkit developed.
- Establishment of a multi-agency play strategy group.

- Successful BIG Lottery bid to establish new play provision during term time and school holidays in two wards.
- Successful Heads of the Valleys bid to develop new play space in the County Borough.
- Successful Lloyds TSB bid to further develop play provision in Penydarren.
- 5 Community play days co-ordinated.
- Funding secured for inclusive afterschool physical play club in Treharris, catering for 32 children.
- Funding secured in partnership with Taf bargoed project for development of play opportunities.
- Report produced for Countyside Council for Wales on Natural play opportunities in the County Borough.

Priority 7

Increasing children's, young people's and their parents' and carers' involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

During the first CYP Plan the participation agenda has been embedded throughout the authority, through individual directorates to organisations. The creation of the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor has demonstrated the Borough's commitment to participation and has received support from a wide audience including the young people themselves”.

Further samples of our achievements during this period include:

- The Participation Promise has been reviewed and revised and now falls inline with the National Kitemark Award.
- A Junior Local Safeguarding Children's Board (JLSCB) has been established and has received the 'South Wales Police Community Initiative Award'. They have also completed a number of issue based initiatives- including: Take the Right Path, a DVD on the impact and consequences of alcohol related issues.
- Wider participation of young people/ participation of a wider audience.
- Increased representation of young people on relevant boards.
- Increased amount of staff trained in children's rights.
- A cohort of young people have been trained to become 'Young Inspectors'.
- Development of the 'Looked After Children' focus panel.
- Full participation agenda recognised across the County Borough .
- The development of a 'Participation workers forum'.

The Merthyr Tydfil County Borough wide forum (MTBWYF) have:

- Participated and assisted with the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Youth Service's Strategy Development.
- Feature as an exemplar within the 'Do We Meet Your Standards' DVD by Save the Children, under the chapter of Respect.

- Organised and participated in the Community Safety Alcohol Consultation which led to the development of discussions cards that complimented the dialogue and learning around this particular campaign.

Priority 8

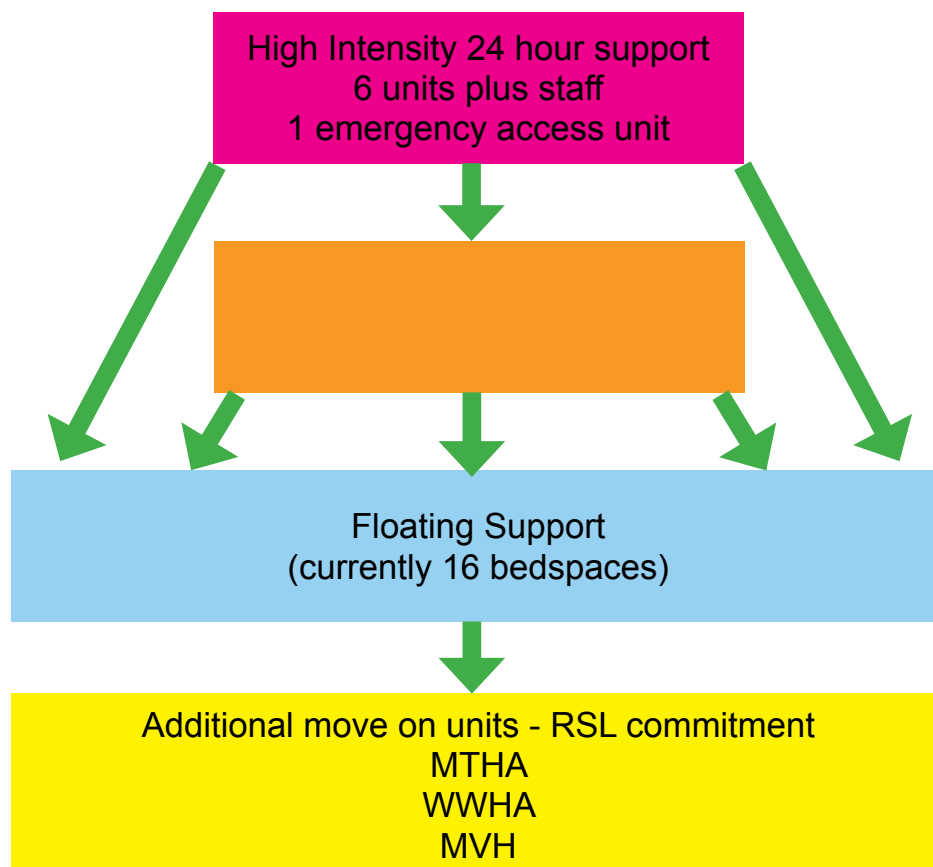
Improving homeless young people's access to housing and support and improving our ability to identify those at risk of becoming homeless and preventing them from becoming homeless.

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

A dedicated multi-agency planning group, the CYPP Young People's Accommodation Sub group, has been established.

The CYPP Young People's Accommodation Group has developed a framework of how they propose to deliver housing support services to young people in the future, which will support our vision:

Proposed Future Delivery Model for Housing Support to Young People in Merthyr Tydfil



High Intensity 24 hour support - six units of accommodation for young people plus one unit for staff, providing twenty four hour on site support has been established. In addition there is an emergency access unit for young people who are in immediate crisis.

The project is now fully operational and a detailed service specification and contract with a provider to provide the support to units, is in place, which includes agreed performance indicators and measurable outcomes.

Medium Intensity support - Four units of accommodation plus daytime support and out of hours floating support is being developed. Relevant planning applications have been submitted, refurbishments will be complete within ten months.

Out of Hours floating support provision: the floating support provision has been remodeled and will be available weekends and evenings.

Learning for Life: The Framework has also enabled the successful acquisition of funding to provide Learning 4 Life, which is currently based at the High Intensity Support Project. Learning for Life is a prevocational training programme for young people. The project will provide training services specifically for vulnerable young people, those not in education training or employment and care leavers.

In addition to the original allocation of £38K Cymorth, the framework is supported via other sources including funding from Supporting People Grant, Supporting People Revenue Grant, Social Services and Social Regeneration and housing benefits.

A meeting has taken place with all local RSL's who have made a commitment to provide units of accommodation to be used for floating support and as move on for those young people who are ready to live independently after completing support and engagement in the tiers of the framework.

Workforce Planning and Development

What have we achieved during our first CYPP under this priority?

Samples of our achievements during this period include:

- Behaviour support teachers have been maintained and are now core funded.
- Primary Mental Health Resource Team have been maintained and are now core funded.
- The introduction and implementation of the Student Assistance Programme (SAP) – with over 130 practitioners trained to deliver the programme.
- CHIPS training for high schools and special schools (WAG funded co-ordinated by Local Public Health Team) The Educational and Child Psychology Service (ECPS) continues to provide high quality services to children schools and their families. In the last Audit Commission Survey (2009) the ECPS achieved the highest ranking for all participating Welsh and English authorities in relation to the effectiveness of the support provided.
- All Practitioners in registered Early Years provision (non maintained) accessed Wellbeing and Involvement training; Young People Say Training being delivered across the Borough.

Appendix 3

Principles and Values

For this second plan we have incorporated the Welsh Government's Strategic Priorities and Broad Aims for tackling child poverty in Wales. This strategy is particularly relevant to us. The high levels of unemployment, the high percentage of low skill or semi skilled jobs and the heavy dependence on benefits means we are ranked as the most deprived Local Authority in the 2008 Welsh Index of Multiple deprivation. We see reducing the impact of poverty on our children as central to everything we do.

Our priorities are set within a consistent strategic context, improving outcomes for children through our 8 priorities, the 7 Welsh Government core aims and the 3 Child Poverty strategic objectives. Delivering on our priorities will improve outcomes for all our children and support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all Partnership agencies in Merthyr Tydfil are fully committed.

Shared Principles

The shared principles about how the Children and Young People's Partnership work together to implement the plan are to:

- commit to deliver agreed priorities.
- be evidenced based, but not stifle experimentation.
- align our resources to our priorities, pooling budgets where appropriate, and ensure value for money.
- Safeguard and protect our children and young people.
- use the tiered model and 'Team around the Family' approach (page 15) to support shared planning.
- be accountable for the quality and performance of our services.
- use a project and performance management approach to deliver the priorities in the plan.
- support the workforce development to underpin the plan.

The principles around which we will organise services to deliver better outcomes for children are to:

- enhance and extend the ways in which children, young people and families can shape the services they receive.
- intervene early when problems are identified so as to prevent greater problems emerging later.
- support universal services, education and health to better support children with more complex needs.
- develop more focused multi-agency and integrated working, especially where children have more complex needs.
- combat prejudice and promote fairness and equality of opportunity for all children, regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or cultural background;
- foster bilingualism and look for new opportunities to promote the Welsh language.

Our planning context

Our planning context has changed since 2008, and will continue to do so. The restructuring of the NHS has meant that Merthyr Tydfil now shares a Local Health Board with Rhondda Cynon Taf. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has reorganised internally so that children's services are now managed in a number of different directorates. Police services continue to be provided by the South Wales Police Force Northern Division. The Local Service Board plays a key role in ensuring that partners, regardless of their organisational boundaries, work together to address all the borough's issues.

The challenging climate for public sector finance is a driver for more change in the search for ever greater efficiency. In this context, with reorganisation of services and changing personnel, the Children and Young People's Partnership and the agreement on shared priorities is more important than ever in retaining a joint focus on improving outcomes for children.

The 8 strategic priorities in our plan are those on which we have agreed locally that we need to focus our efforts. In setting out these strategic priorities, the Plan will guide future guide de-commissioning and commissioning in Merthyr Tydfil.

Accountability and Responsibility

The CYPP has governance arrangements in place and terms of reference, to ensure that relationship accountability, roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all partners and individuals in relation to delivering the plan. These governance arrangements and terms of reference are currently being redrafted as part of the Partnership review process and the streamlining of partnership working.

The Youth Forum is integral to the planning process, having representation at Board level and being involved in decision-making.

Linking needs, services and the views of children and young people to priorities

The findings of our local needs assessment in 2008 which looked at needs, services and the views of children and young people echo much of the analysis of the 2010 Child Poverty Strategy. Many are not within the control of the agencies locally, but require the level of joint working with the National Government and the UK government described in the 2010 Child Poverty Strategy and will be particularly challenging in the current financial climate.

When addressing the Children and Families Measure (2010) and the duty placed on local authorities regarding Participation, which is echoed within the proposed Children's Rights Measure (2010), we remain fundamentally committed to the principle of affording all children and young people the right to be seen and to be heard in Merthyr Tydfil. The rights and entitlement agenda remains paramount in our commitment to the amelioration of child poverty across the Borough, and we will use the County Borough Wide Youth Forum to continue to drive and, where necessary, provide challenge to this agenda regarding all service delivery.

The UNCRC remains at the core of our philosophy here, in particular; “Children have the right to say what they think about decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account”.

Audit of current services

As part of the strategic planning process, we completed an audit of services to assess how they were contributing to tackling local child poverty. This audit identified the views of local partners about how they believed child poverty was being addressed, these views included;

- Organisations recognise that poverty issues are wider than financial/income related, and felt that the contributions they were making to alleviate the impact of poverty in Merthyr Tydfil include:
 - delivering basic skills education,
 - access to training,
 - providing childcare,
 - help with transport etc;
- Referrals to services are based either explicitly on child poverty as part of criteria (family support) implicitly (living in a deprived area, flying start) or on a more general needs basis;
- Some services are in place to respond to child poverty (e.g. supporting families to return to employment; debt advice);
- Organisations are confident that they are engaging the families in most need;
- The majority of services reported the impact of their work to be medium to long term but many were unable to measure that impact specific to its effect on poverty

Commitment to Equality and the Welsh language

We are committed through our plans to combat prejudice and promote fairness and equality of opportunity for all children, regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or cultural background. We will foster bilingualism and look for new opportunities to promote the Welsh language, and to ensure that where families or children and young people wish to receive a service through the medium of Welsh they are able to do so. We will recognise that new migrant families also have language needs.

Sustainability and Well being

Our plan supports the Welsh Government’s Sustainable Development scheme ‘One Wales, One Planet’. The partnerships and agencies within Merthyr Tydfil seek to use the principles of sustainable development in our work, seeking to consider the long term impact of development, promoting resource efficiency and respecting the natural environment. We encourage the use of the principles of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in our schools. We will consider the Merthyr Tydfil Environment Partnership Strategic Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan, supporting and encouraging partners to do likewise.

Appendix 4

Summary of needs assessment

Merthyr Tydfil has a projected population of 55,925 in 2011, an increase of 400 people from 2008 and this is projected to increase by another 400 people during the lifetime of this Plan. 40,000 of this population live in or around Merthyr town with the remainder spread in towns and smaller communities, mostly in the south of the County Borough.

The projected population of children and young people under the age of 25 in 2011 is 17,400, falling by 150 by 2014. The proportion of children and young people is similar to the Welsh average. All local authorities are projected to have rising populations from 2011 to 2014, though Merthyr Tydfil's percentage increase is among the lowest in Wales. Live births have risen from 595 in 2002 to 781 in 2008; numbers of deaths are far more unpredictable however, ranging from 686 in 2002 to 566 in 2006 and 629 in 2008. What remains constant is the high Standardised Mortality Ratio, which for 2006-08 was the second highest in Wales. The population of 0-15yr old children will rise by 300 during this Plan, but the number of young people aged 16-24 years will fall by 460 .

In 2007, 98.2% of the population was UK born, with just 1,000 coming from a non European ethnic background, predominately managerial or professional, mostly connected to the Prince Charles Hospital. In addition, there has been recent inward migration from Europe with new arrivals having a significant impact in the intake of children in the faith primary schools.

18% of the population have 1 or more skills in Welsh, a figure which is below the national average.

Merthyr Tydfil experiences significant socio-economic challenges. 11 of the 36 Lower Super Output Areas in Merthyr Tydfil are ranked in the 10% most deprived in Wales. On almost every measure of well being, Merthyr Tydfil reflects this level of deprivation. Life expectancy at birth is currently 2 years less for people born in Merthyr Tydfil than the Welsh average. 26% of the population has a limiting long-term illness and residents also report much higher levels of mental ill health than the average in Wales.

In 2009, 22% of our working adult population had no qualifications. Although this figure has dropped substantially since 2004, it remains well above the Welsh average and is the highest of all authorities in Wales. The unemployment rate at the end of 2009 was 13.7%, the 2nd highest in Wales, There are also proportionally less managerial or professional jobs in the local economy.

20% of children in Merthyr Tydfil live in workless households, the 7th highest rate in Wales. 13.7% of our working age adults are unemployed, the second highest rate in Wales. Eligibility for free school meals across nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, was 24.8% in 2009/10, the 2nd highest in Wales.

There is a higher rate of looked after children than the average in communities with similar levels of deprivation. The rate is the highest in Wales. In March 2006 the rate of children in need of protection was the joint highest in Wales.

Teenage conception rates in 2008 for girls aged under 18 years were the highest of all English or Welsh unitary authorities, at 73.5 conceptions per 1,000 girls. 33 of these were terminated, there were 52 live births. In the three years up to and including 2008, there were 157 births to girls aged under 18 years.

Educational attainment levels are in line with those in similarly disadvantaged communities, but are low when compared to the all-Wales average. Rates of low birth weight babies, breastfeeding and dental caries in children similarly reflect the levels of disadvantage in our community.

Of those claiming Job Seekers Allowance in 2010, 36.1% were aged 25 or under, compared to the Wales average of 34% in 2007. 9.6% of all households, 2231 in total, are headed by a lone parent, the highest in Wales and the 6th highest in England and Wales.

It is well recognised that the combination of economic disadvantage, low educational attainment and poor health status are usually interlinked and impact on one another, though identifying cause and effect is more complex. Together they create a challenging context for local services.